

# FORT NIAGARA

BY JANET CARNOCHAN

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In this Niagara Peninsula there are many spots with historical associations, battlefields, conflagrations, first parliament, churches, turf clubs, etc., but certainly the most interesting spot is in our view, but not in our territory, across the beautiful boundary river is Fort Niagara, its history predating ours by a century, its many vicissitudes, its varied possessors, Indian, French, British, American, twice besieged and taken, first by the British from the French in 1759, again by the British from the United States in 1813—and twice given back by treaty. The name Niagara has different spellings Ongiara, Ouniagahara, etc., (forty different spellings) as given in the documentary History of New York. It is evident that the accent was on the penult syllable instead of the anti-penult as with us. In Goldsmith's poem "The Traveller" it is thus pronounced. "And Ni-a-gar a stuns with thundering sound," but that is no rule for us as the poets are not slow in taking all kinds of poetic license, of both rhythm and rhyme. The meaning of the word was often given as Thunder of Waters, but it is now acknowledged to mean simply "The Strait." The country was occupied by the Neutrals, a fierce tribe with thirty-four villages on our side of which Niagara was one and four on the U. S. side. The name Neutral was given because they took no part in the wars between the Iroquois to the south and Hurons to the north, but when these nations were at war allowed free passage to either to reach the other's territory. They were however completely destroyed by the Senecas, and the Hurons were afterwards almost annihilated by the Iroquois as the Eries had been before. The first we know of the neighborhood being visited by the white man was in 1626 by Father Daillon, who is said to have visited the western side of the river, but we really know little of its history till fifty years after that date when the indomitable LaSalle,—that man of iron, who of noble family destined for the church he came an explorer, endured what we would think frightful hardships saw all his plans fail, tramped over hundreds of miles with a breaking heart and finally though he had once reached the mouth of the Mississippi when coming a second time to explore it by sea, sailed past its mouth unknowingly and was assassinated by his discontented followers.